

People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

VOLUME 36 ISSUE 17

MUMBAI

SEPTEMBER 10 - 24, 2023

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION ₹. 100/-



LESSON FROM CHANDRAYAAN3
"INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON ACHIEVING SUCCESS
WE [SRO] FOCUSED ON ELIMINATING FAILURES."
WILL OUR POLITICIANS EVER LEARN THIS!

Radicalizing Reformation

"The Cry For A Life-Sustaining Economy" Ten Theses

Economic globalization, which promised endlessly increasing prosperity, has overstepped its limits and is tipping over into its opposite. We are overdue not only to fight the symptoms, but to address the root causes of this radical change. Humanity and the earth are crying out for fairer, more equitable and more sustainable forms of economic activity.

'Radicalizing Reformation' is a project launched on the occasion of the celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation led by Martin Luther. The project under the leadership of Dr. Ulrich Duchrow with the participation of a group of theologians and social scientists across the world, has been engaged in re-envisioning the critique of Luther on the 'theological' and 'political economy' issues of today. The article published below is an abstract of a paper titled "The Cry for a Life-Sustaining Economy - Ten Theses" prepared by the working group on Faith's Response to Today's Political Economy.

1. The cry for justice, especially from the countries of the global South, has become unmistakable. Humanity is on the brink of social cataclysm and global destruction. The foremost crises of the past two decades—climate change, financial crisis, pandemic and migration flows—demonstrated how the international economic and financial

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New International Financial and Economic Architecture

Consultation on Labour

Explore the Heart of Labour

At the consultation a highly critical point was recognized. If theology and the line between being and non-being are topics that "ultimately concern" us, labour is undeniably a central issue. Many faith traditions depict the divine as a worker, highlighting the significance of labour in our lives. The consultation sought to recognize labour's centrality and the dignity of work as essential elements for a fulfilling life.

In the lively urban setting, theologians, church delegates, activists, and individuals came together for the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics, and Management for an Economy of Life (GEM School) at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 21 to 23 August. The participants were engaged in deep and meaningful deliberations on Labour.

Hosted by the Council of Churches of Malaysia, the gathering was part of the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) initiative, co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC), World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Council, and Council for World Mission.

The theological essence of labour

At the consultation, a highly critical point was recognized. If theology and the line between being and non-being are topics that "ultimately concern" us, labour is undeniably a central issue. Many faith traditions depict the divine as a worker, highlighting the significance of labour in our lives. The consultation sought to recognize labour's centrality and the dignity of work as essential elements for a fulfilling life.

Unmasking exploitation in labour

It became evident during the consultation that labor continues to be

exploited within our current economic system. Decades of neoliberal globalization have reshaped the labor landscape, leading to workers' migration across national borders and the erosion of their wages and rights. Among the most vulnerable groups are racialized communities, youth, and women, with women often facing unpaid or underpaid and unrecognized labour. Additionally, the challenges posed by climate change and the rise of the "gig economy" have further deepened workers' vulnerability.

Labour as a catalyst for change

However, the consultation also revealed that labour is not merely a site of exploitation; it's a potential source of alternatives. From campaigns advocating for just wages, social protection, and migrants' rights to establishing cooperatives where workers have ownership, churches, and faith-rooted organizations worldwide have been at the forefront of supporting and standing in solidarity with workers.

A theological communique on Labour

A significant outcome of the consultation was the creation of a theological communique on labor. It highlighted that places of work and labour are where diversity thrives, bringing together people of all races, genders, ages, and abilities. This diversity becomes the fertile ground for solidarity. In the words of the apostle Paul, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Cor 12:26). This deep solidarity can unite diverse humanity, the natural world, and the divine in new expressions of unity within diversity.

The consultation issued a compelling call to action. It urged churches, the broader ecumenical movement, and society to engage in conscientization. This process empowers people to identify unjust sociopolitical structures that hinder the realization of our full humanity. It encourages organizing workers and forming solidarity with industrial workers, agricultural laborers, migrant workers, and refugees. Moreover, it emphasizes active participation in building alternatives, including worker cooperatives and community-based projects.

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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

Can the BRICS be an alternative to G-7?

The 15th Summit of the BRICS held in Johannesburg from August 22 to 24, despite the rivalry between India and China, provides hopes about the emergence of a new coalition to counter the Western-led G-7 club. BRIC formed in 2009 as a coalition of Brazil, Russia, India and China became BRICS in 2010 by inducting South Africa into this forum. While this coalition could not live up to the expectations, it has produced some significant outcomes like the New Development Bank, Contingency Reserve Arrangement for Currency and R & D Centre for vaccines. The Development Bank with headquarters in Beijing that funded nearly 100 projects could not grow as an alternative to the World Bank.

The fall of Mr. Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva from power in Brazil caused a setback for the forward momentum of the BRICS. The discontinuation of in-person Summit since 2019 owing to COVID-19 further dampened the vitality of this coalition. Along with this, Russia's war in Ukraine in 2022, created a new geopolitical situation. However, the participation of Mr. Lula de Silva after his return to power in Brazil and the resumption of in-person Summit provided a boost to the vision and strength of the BRICS. One of the main decisions in this Summit was the induction of the West-Asian powers: Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates as well as Ethiopia and Argentina from Africa and Latin America. As a result, the members of BRICS hold 30% of global GDP and represents 40% of the world's population. Further, by adding six out of the ten biggest global oil suppliers as its members, the BRICS enjoys a new heft in the field of energy. These sources of strength along with the interest evinced by as many as 40 countries from the Global South to join the BRICS give hope about its emergence as a counterforce to G-7.

One of the issues discussed in the Summit was Russia's quest to create an alternative to the G-7-driven global political-economic model. India demanded changes in the global multilateral system to make it more responsive to the needs of the Global South. However, unlike Russia and China, Indian officials have not spoken aggressively for de-dollarisation. The increase in the number of members from 5 to 11 and the expressed desire of nearly 40 countries to join this coalition show the desire of more countries for a democratic global governance. The beginning of trade between many countries outside dollar-exchange regime attests that this goal is achievable. However, the inner contradictions between China and India can be dampening. How can India be active in the BRICS while keeping her commitment to Quad, G-7 and G-20, is a question that casts shadow over the vitality of the former.

Owing to historical, geographical and developmental reasons, India ought to be committed to the vision of BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Global South. At the same time, the rivalry with China forces her to associate with the US-led forums. India's position in such a geographical fault-line with interest in both sides can be a deterrent to the strength of the BRICS. Although this is a deficit, the BRICS after the 15th Summit appears to be a coalition capable of promoting multipolarity in the global political and economic system.

Thought for the Fortnight

*The reason why
the world lacks unity,
and lies broken and in heaps,
is, because man is
disunited with himself.*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Mission Accompaniment for Inclusive Transformation through Radical Intervention

Henry Sharma Nithiyanandham

The missionaries of the American Arcot Mission taught us the important virtue of Radical Intervention. They understood that in order to serve the people truly, we must not only proclaim the Gospel but also actively engage in addressing their physical and emotional needs. Through their teachings and actions, they advocated for radical change, intervention, and transformation. They recognized that spreading the message of Christ requires us to step out of our comfort zones, challenge societal norms, and work towards inclusive change.

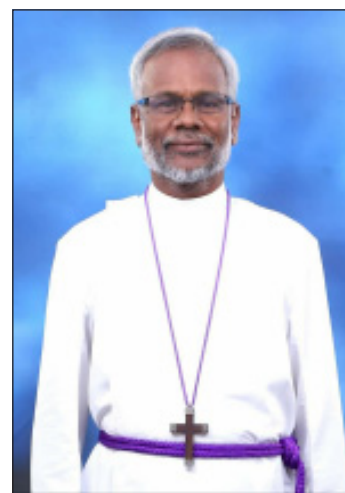
[Excerpts from the text of the address delivered at the Tamil Region Workshop for Missionaries held at Yelagiri Retreat Centre on 29 August 2023]

The concept of mission accompaniment holds immense significance in our efforts to create a more inclusive and transformed society. In our pursuit of spreading the message of God's love, it is crucial that we not only preach but also walk alongside those in need, supporting them in their journey towards a better life. This form of accompaniment requires us to be present, listening, and responding to the unique needs of individuals and communities.

The American Arcot Mission holds a special place in the hearts of the people of Vellore. It is a testament to the transformative power of faith and the unwavering dedication of those missionaries who, against all odds, embarked on a journey to a land skeptical of Christianity and left an indelible mark. They not only brought the message of salvation, but also offered assistance in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, and education. Their holistic approach to missionary work resonates with us to this day.

The missionaries of the American Arcot Mission taught us the important virtue of Radical Intervention. They understood that in order to truly serve the people, we must not only proclaim the Gospel but also actively engage in addressing their physical and emotional needs. Through their teachings and actions, they advocated for radical change, intervention, and transformation. They recognized that spreading the message of Christ requires us to step out of our comfort zones, challenge societal norms, and work towards inclusive change.

We have witnessed firsthand the impact of their teachings. The



The Rt. Rev. Henry Sharma Nithiyanandham is Bishop in the Diocese of Vellore of the Church of South India

missionaries assisted in the building of churches, hospitals, and schools, creating spaces where communities could come together, find solace, and receive education. They facilitated practices of agriculture, encouraging self-sufficiency and sustainable living. Their medical assistance reached those who had no access to healthcare, bringing healing and hope to countless lives. In all these endeavors, they exemplified the principles of Radical Intervention, empowering individuals and communities to seek transformation on multiple levels.

Today, we have the unique opportunity to reflect on the legacy left by the American Arcot Mission. Their teachings continue to inspire us and urge us to find innovative ways to accompany those we serve. The concept of Mission Accompaniment for Inclusive Transformation through Radical Intervention calls us to be catalysts for change, bearing witness to the love of Christ through our actions and words.

Let us embrace this powerful concept and assimilate it into our missionary work. Let us be the agents of Radical Intervention, challenging systems of injustice

and oppression. Let us not settle for complacency, but instead push boundaries and break barriers in our pursuit of inclusive transformation. May the spirit of the American Arcot mission guide our every step as we work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Mission accompaniment demands that we ask ourselves difficult questions: Are we truly present in the lives of those we serve, or are we merely passing through? Are we actively addressing the underlying causes of poverty and marginalization, or are we merely offering temporary solutions? Are we willing to engage with social and political structures that perpetuate inequality, or are we content with providing short-term relief?

True mission accompaniment requires us to be agents of radical change. We must be willing to challenge systems of oppression, advocate for justice, and empower the marginalized. We cannot simply be bystanders in the face of injustice; we must be on the frontlines, fighting for a society that embraces all its members.

Let us learn from the American Arcot Missionaries' legacy and commit ourselves to this radical intervention. In doing so, we will witness an inclusive transformation that transcends boundaries, creates bridges of understanding, and fosters a society where all individuals are valued and respected.

May the spirit of mission accompaniment guide us in our endeavors, and may we be unwavering in our commitment to radical intervention. Together, let us ignite the flames of love, compassion, and justice so that our mission can have a profound and lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

May God bless our collective efforts towards inclusive transformation.

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Contemporary Global Political Economy - 3

Unscrupulous means to cheat the shareholders

Varughese George

The global corporates are heartless and they have no hesitation in devising unscrupulous means to cheat the shareholders.

The crash of Enron is a classic case in the electricity sector. This company was projected as a model firm in business schools. Sheron Watkins, the Vice President of the development department of Enron Corporation had prepared two letters addressed to Kenneth Lay, the Chairman of the Enron Corporation. She put the first letter in the post box of the company without attesting her name. The charge was that Enron was hiding its debts and overvaluing its assets. In the anonymous memo she said, "I am incredibly nervous that our company will implode in a wave of accounting scandals". The six-page second letter was given personally to Kenneth Lay. He used this opportunity to buy maximum shares of the company and sold them hastily for ninety dollars per share. He also called a meeting of the workers' representatives and urged them to invest their retirement fund and pension fund in the company's shares which they did. A week later the mask of the company was shed to shreds and the share value fell from 90 dollars to 27 cents. The company was liquidated, but the savings of Kenneth Lay was 230 million dollars! In an interview with this whistle blower later, she said that 60 billion dollars of its investors became worthless. The banks who funded Enron including City Group, JP Morgan, Credit Leon, and State Bank of India lost millions of dollars. **The seventh largest company in the US went bankrupt due to greed and fraud.**

Forbes Magazine, the golden tongue of capitalism, in a recent issue admitted that only 10 per cent of the corporate frauds are detected. They quote a study from journal of Financial Economics that tells that corporate fraud destroys 1.6 per cent equity value each year which equals 830 billion dollars each year. In 2022, the Secretary General of the United Nations publicly chastised the oil and gas firms for 'grotesque greed' in times of energy crisis. He said that four oil and gas companies including Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Shell and Total Energies combined, earned 51 billion dollars more than the previous quarter.

The pharmaceutical

Major pharma firms accumulate their huge profits from the third world. They refuse to allocate more resources for research on diseases in third world. Since the TRIPS, the patients are vulnerable since there is no access to essential drugs. Many developing countries did not even have delegations in Geneva to negotiate the TRIPS Treaty and the language of the treaty was shrouded in mystery.

corporations are having a field day after the patent amendment by the WTO. In the pre- WTO period, there was the facility of process patent whereby hundreds of same medicines could be manufactured with slight change in formulations, so that there was access to medicine at low prices. But since then, came the rule of product patent whereby newly invented medicines can be manufactured only after twenty years by other companies and that too with ban on compulsory licensing. Consequently, the prices of essential medicines shot up and became unaffordable to the common people. The classic case is about the medicine supply for HIV patients in Africa. An Indian firm, Cipla was supplying medicine in Africa for 550 dollars and the same medicine was being sold by the US multinationals in Africa for a price between 10,000 and 15000 dollars. This is how it happened. An Indian researcher Dr. Rama Rao informed Dr. Hamied, the owner of Cipla that he had developed a chemical synthesis of AZT or Azidothymidine and wanted Cipla to manufacture it.



Dr. Varughese George
is the National General Secretary
of Lok Tantrik Janata Dal

Read the rest from Quartz: "It was the only drug that postponed the onset of AIDS. But just one company, Burroughs Wellcome in the US made it and it was selling the drug at roughly \$ 8000 per year per patient. Hamied readily agreed to manufacture it and launched the drug in 1993 at less than one tenth of the international price or about \$2 a day." The story does not end here. Three years later Cipla manufactured a cocktail of three medicines called HAART, highly active anti-retroviral therapy effective in controlling AIDS.

These three drugs were then being manufactured by three multinational pharmaceutical corporations. At that time the combined price for it was \$12000 per patient per year. The Doctors without Borders held consultations with Dr Hamied and he offered to supply the cocktail of three medicines at a price of \$350 per year per patient.

The New York Times broke the story with this announcement, "In a move that could force big drug multinationals to cut the prices of their AIDS drugs, an Indian company offered today to supply triple therapy drug cocktails for dollars 350 a year per patient to a doctors' group working in Africa". This took the western countries by storm and the Big Pharmas accused South Africa of violating international laws by agreeing to import cheap generic drugs from India. Thirty-nine international drug companies joined together and complained that it is a violation of TRIPS! (Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights).

Since the TRIPS, the multinational pharmaceutical industry has amassed huge profits even at the envy of electronic and engineering industry. But they still spend only a slight portion of their research allocation for the diseases of tropical countries. Major pharma firms accumulate their huge profits from the third world; they refuse to allocate more resources for research on diseases in third world. Since the TRIPS, the patients are vulnerable since there is no access to essential drugs. Many developing countries did not even have delegations in Geneva to negotiate the TRIPS Treaty and the language of the Treaty was shrouded in mystery.

The Tech companies are also coming of age and they have also customized the practice of greed and unfair practices. The internet was developed forty-five years ago to connect supercomputers and a few research organisations led this task of developing World Wide Web. The European Particle Research Centre, The Illinois University, The Pentagon Research Centre and MIT were some of these organisations.

Prof. Tim Berners Lee of CERN who led these research teams wanted to make 'web to serve humanity by establishing it as a global public good and a basic right'. But within a decade a few tech companies appropriated this technology and made it a private good. Now these tech companies have infiltrated into every aspect of human life and even locate where we are.

Cory Doctorowe, internationally known expert and journalist, in an interview said, "We see increasing use of Google location data and what the state calls either geofence warrants or reverse warrants. This is where a law enforcement agency goes to Google sometimes, but not always with a warrant and describes a location, a box, this street by street, and a time frame, say 1 to 4 pm and demands to know everyone who is in that box. This was used extensively against Black Lives Matter movement demonstrators and then against 6 January demonstrators".

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The City Swimming pool where DIVERS galore, may be called DIVERSITY!

To be continued

The Goodness of the Creation - 10

Rejuvenation of Rivers and Climate Change

Mathew Koshy Punnackadu

Rivers hold immense significance for both natural ecosystems and human societies. Just as blood vessels transport oxygen, nutrients, and waste products throughout the human body, rivers transport water, sediments, nutrients, and other materials across the Earth's surface. Rivers are crucial in distributing essential resources for ecosystems, agriculture, and human communities. Blood vessels connect various body parts, enabling communication and interaction between organs. Similarly, rivers connect different landscapes, ecosystems, and regions, allowing for the movement of plants, animals, and nutrients. Restoration of rivers and lakes is one way to counter Climate Change.

Water scarcity and disputes over water resources can be significant sources of conflict in the future, and some experts have raised concerns about the possibility of water-related conflicts leading to tensions and even violence between nations. Water scarcity is a growing concern owing to population growth, urbanisation, climate change, and mismanagement of water resources. Many regions worldwide face water stress, and the competition for limited water supplies could exacerbate country tensions.

Once, Cherrapunji was famous because it received the largest volume of rainfall in the world. It still does but, ironically, experiences acute water shortages. This is mainly the result of extensive deforestation and a lack of proper water conservation methods. There has been extensive soil erosion, and often, despite the heavy rainfall and ideal location in the green hills of Meghalaya, one can see stretches of hillside devoid of trees and greenery and people have to walk long distances to collect water.

The area surrounding the River Ruparel in Rajasthan receives only half the rainfall Cherrapunji receives, but proper management and conservation have proved that more water is available than in Cherrapunji. The basin of the Ruparel River covers some 3,250 sq. km and includes about 250 villages. The region was plagued by many problems too familiar in most rural India.

After India's independence, the government asserted its rights over the forests, diluting the

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local community's ownership of the forests and its resources. Forest officials became lords and masters, allowing private contractors to fell trees and alienating the people who had conserved the region's ecology. Rampant deforestation in the river basin led to the destruction of its catchment. As agricultural activity picked up, more areas began to be cleared as people increasingly moved to agriculture from animal husbandry. Farmers could cultivate the cleared land as leaves helped retain water in the ground. But after nearly five years of the clearing, the topsoil started getting washed away due to erosion. Springs began to dry up as no trees and shrubs were left to help recharge the groundwater. With the drop in productivity, many farmers moved to other forest areas, and this destructive cycle was repeated. Stone quarrying by the construction industry also led to ecological disruption.

An NGO called 'Tarun Bharat Sangh' (TBS), was founded in 1975 under Rajendra Singh, an Indian water conservationist and environmentalist, who has been instrumental in fighting the slow bureaucracy and mining lobby. It has helped villagers take charge of water management in their semi-arid area as it lies close to the Thar Desert, through the use of johads, rainwater storage tanks, check dams and other time-tested and path-breaking techniques. The water level in the river began declining due to extensive deforestation and agricultural activities along the banks and by the 1980s, a drought-like situation began to spread. Under the guidance of TBS, the women living in the area



Dr. Mathew Koshy Punnackadu is an internationally renowned environmentalist. He is the Hon. Advisor, Department of Ecological Concerns, CSI Synod

were encouraged to build johads (round ponds) and dams to hold back rainwater. Gradually, water began returning as proper methods of conserving and harvesting rainwater were followed. The river's revival has transformed the place's ecology and the lives of the people along its banks. Their relationship with their natural environment has been strengthened. **It has proved that humankind is not the master of the environment but a part of it. If human beings put in an effort, the damage caused by us can be undone.**

Starting from a single village in 1985, over the years TBS helped build over 8,600 johads and other water conservation structures to collect rainwater for the dry seasons, brought water back to over 1,000 villages and revived five rivers in Rajasthan, Arvari, Ruparel, Sarsa, Bhagani and Jahajwali. **Rajendra Singh is also known as "Waterman of India", he won the Magsaysay Award in 2001 and Stockholm**

Water Prize in 2015.

The rural folk in the villages of district Alwar, Rajasthan, have become the masters of their destiny. And one has to resort to mythology to find metaphors to illustrate their achievements. After three decades of sand, heat and infertility, the basin of the Ruparel river has discovered perennial water, prosperity and abundance. The benefits are not restricted to the villages.

River restoration and proper management of water resources can play a significant role in mitigating, and adapting to, climate change. Healthy rivers and wetlands act as natural carbon sinks, absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. When these ecosystems are restored or protected, they can sequester significant amounts of carbon, helping to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

Varattar, a tributary of the Pamba river, used to flow through the Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts of southern Kerala, India. Pamba is an important part of Kerala's cultural lineage. Varattar connected Pamba with the Manimala river. In its days of glory, Varattar used to be the main water source for hundreds of households. It also acted as a natural flood control mechanism between the two rivers, carrying the excess water both ways. Sand mining and land encroachment, coupled with short-sighted developmental activities, spelt the death knell for Varattar some decades ago, and the river was left as just wet patches of land, increasingly encroached upon.

The 'Varatte aar' ('let the river come' in Malayalam) campaign is a unique experiment in water conservation and environment management efforts, where the will, resources and power of the people are effectively utilized for the rejuvenation of an almost dead river. Transparency and accountability were ensured, and a concurrent social audit was initiated along with the processes. The vision for the programme was provided by the Haritha Keralam (Green Kerala) Mission, headed by the Chief Minister as Chairperson and Dr. T. N. Seema, Vice Chairperson, and includes ministers and experts from various fields. The campaign kicked off on May 29, 2017, with a walk along the banks of the dilapidated river, in which ministers of the state, MLAs, and people's representatives from the local bodies participated, along with an enthusiastic crowd, who wished to see the river run its course once again. The civil works started after a walk with the participation of various groups. Unscientifically constructed man-made structures along the river's path were removed after building consensus through local-level consultations. All financial resources were pooled without any financial assistance from the state government, and the daily accounts were recorded and presented in the WhatsApp group created specifically for coordinating the campaign activities.

Once the path was almost cleared and assisted by the abundant monsoon rain during the third week of June, the river started flowing through its forgotten path once again, days ahead of the expected opening. This was a true festival for the people, and they celebrated the river's rebirth by taking to the waters in large numbers.

River restoration and effective water resources management can help counteract climate change impacts by sequestering carbon, regulating floods, improving water quality, conserving biodiversity, and enhancing community resilience. These efforts contribute to a more sustainable and climate-resilient future.

After India's independence, the government asserted its rights over the forests, diluting the local community's ownership of the forests and its resources. Forest officials became lords and masters, allowing private contractors to fell trees and alienating the people who had conserved the region's ecology.

River restoration and proper management of water resources can play a significant role in mitigating, and adapting to, climate change. Healthy rivers and wetlands act as natural carbon sinks, absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. When these ecosystems are restored or protected, they can sequester significant amounts of carbon, helping to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

To be continued

Radicalizing Reformation

"The Cry For A Life-Sustaining Economy" Ten Theses

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architecture not only became outdated, but life-threatening. Economic globalization, which promised endlessly increasing prosperity, has overstepped its limits and is tipping over into its opposite. We are overdue not only to fight the symptoms, but to address the root causes of this radical change. Humanity and the earth are crying out for fairer, more equitable and more sustainable forms of economic activity.

2. Unbridled neoliberal capitalism disposed of its social and ecological framework through deregulation and liberalization. Its sole measure of success became maximum profits. Such economy is addicted to growth and has decoupled itself from any higher goal beyond profit maximization. The impact is staring us in the face: pollution and environmental devastation, disdain for non-marketable values, misleading and fatal progress metrics, military protection of global markets, privatization of common and shared resources such as water, land, health care. **The most consequential social effects of this financially dominated capitalism are blatant social inequality and injustice, which in turn provoke the rise of populist movements and autocratic forms of government — the very movements that now threaten our democracies on a broad front.**

We must fundamentally question the spirit, inner logic and practice of neoliberal economies.
We oppose the mindset of limitless self-interest
with the mindset for the common good and genuine support of life;
we oppose the logic of maximizing mammon and profits at any prize
with the logic of meaningful, constructive relationships
between people and the reciprocal integration of people and their habitat.
The practice of needless and resource-devouring consumption in the futile attempt
to further glut an insatiable, growth-addicted economic model must end.
It must give way to a sustainable economic practice that reliably serves life and its reasonable needs.
In doing so, it must respect planetary boundaries
to protect our deeply interlinked web of life on this planet.

3. For over 40 years, the Ecumenical Movement and the confessional church federations have condemned "free", unbridled market capitalism as an unacceptable world economic order. While indifferently demanding never-ending sacrifices from the poor and from God's creation, it still claims that the creation of even more wealth and abundance will save the world. **The ecological death spiral, unbridled market capitalism set in motion, can only be brought under control if we re-imagine our economic framework with urgent priority.**

4. Three fundamental insights emerge from the evolution of capitalism from early modern mercantilism through industrial capitalism and the social market economy to today's financial capitalism:
1) Unregulated and absolute competition leads to the "war of all against all" (Th. Hobbes);
2) The structures and constraints of the neoliberal economic system cannot be overcome by

moral appeals to the individual economic actors, but only by a redesigned framework mandatory for everyone;
3) It remains the task of politicians to establish this framework that sustains and serves life. **Politicians must relearn to fulfil this task again.**

5. Our goal is to work with economists to develop clear strategies and viable paths to transform our current economic system. It must become capable of, and assist in, overcoming the existential crises that darken our future and threaten life on our fragile planet. **The underpinnings of the Christian faith give us a crisis-proven and reliable orientation for this.**

6. **The dignity of every human being, the protection of nature, respect for one's neighbour and the hope for a life in justice and peace are the guiding principles of all Christian ethics.**

7. Christian faith is thus at odds with all systems that set themselves absolute. Beyond

totalitarian systems, this includes our current neoliberal model of finance-dominated capitalism. **Christian faith, therefore, urges economic transformation away from, and beyond, such economies because they degenerated now to be hostile to life on Earth.**

8. We must fundamentally question the spirit, inner logic and practice of neoliberal economies. We oppose the mindset of limitless self-interest with the mindset for the common good and genuine support of life; we oppose the logic of maximizing mammon and profits at any prize with the logic of meaningful, constructive relationships between people and the reciprocal integration of people and their habitat. **The practice of needless and resource-devouring consumption in the futile attempt to further glut an insatiable, growth-addicted economic model must end. It must give way to a sustainable economic practice that reliably**

serves life and its reasonable needs. In doing so, it must respect planetary boundaries to protect our deeply interlinked web of life on this planet.

9. In the spirit of an ethics of responsibility, we, therefore, demand that a new framework order be drawn up to harness national and global economic activities to ensure it delivers on the above requirements. Such a framework must realign the four pillars of the dominant capitalist system—property, money, work, and our utilization of nature—to sustainably serve the essential needs of all people alive today, of generations yet unborn and their joint habitat. **Only together can we attain liberty for all acting subjects, live out fair coexistence among all humans, and re-establish conditions for future generations to exist in like manner.**

10. **Providing specific and competent designs of such a framework order is not the expertise of church. We therefore seek the cooperation with proficient members and groups within and beyond our churches. We request participation of alternative movements and organizations and especially of economists, business ethicists and institutes who share our goals. Our declaration *The Cry For A Life-Serving Economy* seeks to initiate this dialogue for the design of a new economic order.**

— Martin Hoffman, Mick Grzonka, John M. Itty —

New International Financial and Economic Architecture

Consultation on Labour - Explore the Heart of Labour

A Call to Action

>>> *Contd. from Page 1 Col. 4*
Empathy through exposure

As part of the program, participants visited initiatives run by Myanmar and Afghan migrants and refugees. This eye-opening experience allowed them to grasp the vulnerability of migrant workers while also witnessing their remarkable resilience and hope as they struggle against the odds to survive.

A call to action

The consultation concluded by issuing a compelling call to action. It urged churches, the broader ecumenical movement, and society to engage in conscientization. This process empowers people to identify unjust sociopolitical structures



Participants in the Consultation

that hinder the realization of our full humanity. It encourages organizing workers and forming solidarity

with industrial workers, agricultural laborers, migrant workers, and refugees. Moreover, it emphasizes active participation in building alternatives, including worker cooperatives and community-based projects.

The NIFEA Consultation on Labour showcased how working together and taking collective action could effectively tackle the urgent problems related to labor and the dignity of human beings. It promoted a rich exchange of thoughts, viewpoints, and shared promises. It underscored the idea that work was not merely a way to achieve goals but a fundamental aspect of our humanity, deserving of honor and regard.

— NIFEA News

International Conference for Reconciliation

“Could Colombia’s peace process be an inspiration to the rest of the world?”

The International Conference for Reconciliation was held at Bogota in Colombia on 9 August 2023. The keynote address was delivered by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Mtata, World Council of Churches (WCC) Programme Director for Public Witness and Diakonia, on the theme “Ecumenical Experiences and Learnings in the Construction of Peace.”

Second and concluding part of excerpts from the keynote address:

The kind of peace, as promoted in the ecumenical movement, must also be reflected at the level of relations among nations and peoples. To respect the sanctity of life and build peace among peoples, churches must work to strengthen international human rights law as well as treaties and instruments of mutual accountability and conflict resolution.

To prevent deadly conflicts and mass killings, the proliferation of small arms and weapons of war must be stopped and reversed. Churches must build trust and collaborate with other communities of faith and people of different worldviews to reduce national capacities for waging war, eliminate weapons that put humanity and the planet at unprecedented risk, and generally delegitimize the institution of war.

This scope of the theological vision of peace cannot be achieved by nations divided over political dispensations and regimes. It requires a long-term approach which can only be fulfilled by those who see themselves working towards the realisation of the eschatological kingdom of God. This is our call to the churches and people of Colombia.

Conclusion and promise of the Colombian peace process

Could Colombia’s peace process be an inspiration to the rest of the world at a time when the whole world is witnessing the resurgence of the Cold war, except that this one is hot?

Could God’s promise in Leviticus be realised in Colombia? “I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove wild beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass

The successful resolution of the Colombian conflict will serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for other conflict-ridden regions worldwide. It will demonstrate that peace is possible even in the most entrenched and complex situations, encouraging other nations and parties to rekindle their commitment to peaceful dialogue and reconciliation.



Rev. Dr. Kenneth Mtata, WCC programme director for Public Witness and Diakonia, reflects on ecumenical experiences in construction of peace at the International Conference for Reconciliation. Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

through your country” (Leviticus 26:6).

Is Colombia going to be the fulfilment, even in a partial way, of the prophecy of Isaiah? “In that day the wolf and the lamb will lie down together, and the leopard and goats will be at peace. Calves and fat cattle will be safe among lions, and a little child shall lead them all. The cows will graze among bears; cubs and calves will lie down together, and lions will eat grass like the cows. Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes, and a little child who puts his hand in a nest of deadly adder’s will pull it out unharmed.” (Isaiah 11:6-8).

The successful resolution of the Colombian conflict will serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for other conflict-ridden regions worldwide. It will demonstrate that peace is possible even in the most entrenched and complex

situations, encouraging other nations and parties to rekindle their commitment to peaceful dialogue and reconciliation.

It is our hope that a Colombia success story can also pave the way for the global community to reconsider its approach to

conflict resolution. It can remind us all that lasting peace is not solely about military victories or unilateral dominance but requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach. It is for this reason that the WCC is committed to accompany you in this process.

Our accompaniment would not have been complete without some of our partners here on the ground.

As I conclude I therefore want to recognize Diálogo Intereclesial por la Paz de Colombia (DiPAZ) which has ensured the coordinated participation of the churches in the national peace process.

The WCC is grateful to accompany DiPAZ and all our partners in this vision for peace in Colombia. We are also grateful to the Lutheran World Federation that has provided physical office space for us to use while we are involved in this process.

I also want to appreciate our cooperation with the Latin America Catholic Bishops’ Conference, with whom we have agreed to deepen our cooperation for the sake of peace.

Last but not least, let me also mention the Honorable Senator Lorena Ríos Cuellar for her unflinching commitment to make sure the churches and civil society are recognized as key actors in the nation peace process.

Our call is to humanize conflict so that we are moved by compassion to find common ground. We are calling you to rise above your partisan affiliations so that you get united in one greater calling of peace, justice, and unity. We are encouraging you to choose to be the example and catalyst for a new era of peace, reconciliation and abundant life for all people.

– WCC News



Agenda for just digital future

Continuation from the last issue

D. We want the following to be underscored as essential digital rights:

1. The right to be forgotten
2. The right not to be subjected to fake news, disinformation, and misinformation
3. The right to freedom of expression online, with limits and respect for the rights of historically oppressed communities
4. The right to be heard
5. The right to access knowledge
6. The right to timely and

We want a digital future that is gender sensitive, in which human rights are respected; that is safe and secure, equitable, free, unbiased, accessible, transparent, inclusive, not exploitative, oppressive, or discriminatory. We want a digital future that is free from misogyny, hate, violence, and all forms of harm to girls, women, and gender minorities. We want a digital future in which tech investment is accessible to innovators from all cultures and backgrounds, one that is focused on the common good rather than on profit, one that is localized, respects and complements the values of communities.

accurate information

7. The right to human dignity online
8. The right to privacy online
9. The right to data protection
10. The right to digital education
11. The right to equal participation and access
12. The right to personal

agency with respect to access to content disseminated on the Internet

13. The right to own our data as individuals, communities, and nations
14. The right to accessible and comprehensive digital education
15. The right to opt out of the digital sphere; The right to

participate in, to access citizenship entitlements, and to conduct everyday life offline.

16. The right to access grievance redressal mechanisms.

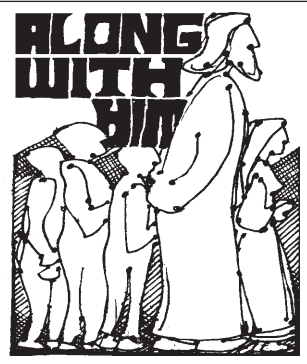
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Agreed on 3rd August 2023 by participants in the WACC Partners’ Consultation held in Nairobi.

– WACC News

500



Mammen Varkey

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'He said to him the third time 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, 'Follow me.'" John 21: 15-19.

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' John 21: 15.

Why that question to Simon Peter?

There were certain clear reasons for the Risen Lord to ask that question to Peter, one of the chief disciples, who led six other disciples to go out for fishing.

A few reasons are shared here.

1. Do we also 'rebuken' the Master?

As Jesus went around the villages of Caesarea, he wanted to know how his disciples understood him and his mission. "And Jesus went on with his disciples, to villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'who do men say

that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, 'Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he charged them to tell no one about him." Mark 8: 27 - 30 (RSV).

The Master was happy about the answer of Peter. And he strongly doubted whether Peter and other disciples had adequate, rather correct, understanding of the Christ that he was. So, without any delay, Jesus decided to start teaching them about the nature of the mission that he would carry out as the Christ.

"And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly." Mark 8: 31. This frank, clear statement of Jesus about the nature and future of the mission of 'the Christ', shocked, rather infuriated, Peter. It is written, "And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him." Mark

8: 32. Unbelievably, a disciple 'rebuked' the Master! Deeply disturbed by the Master's exposition how he would be 'the Christ', the Messiah, in history, Peter, the chief disciple, did not hesitate to rebuke 'the Christ'. Rebuking the Master, the Christ, Peter proved himself to be the 'antithesis' of the Christ, 'Satan', the total rejection of the Christ. And Jesus, very bluntly, said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are not on the side of God, but of men." Mark 8: 33. So the Risen Master did want to ascertain whether he would love his Master who had, fully obeying the will of God, the Father, allowed himself to be crucified and killed. Jesus was asking whether his beloved disciple would, still, want 'to take him aside and rebuke him!' Mark 8: 32. Or whether he loved the Master who got on to the cross and sacrificed himself?

2. Do we also ask, 'what shall we have'?

The Risen Master wanted to ascertain another matter also from his beloved disciple Peter. We read in the Gospel According to Matthew, "Then Peter said, in reply, "Lo, we have left

everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" Matt 19: 27. Jesus, the Christ, was the one who ascended the cross and what he had to offer his followers was only the cross. So he wanted to know that his chief disciple who had 'left everything for following him' would be satisfied with one present, the present of the cross. By affirming that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, Peter was declaring his hope of the establishment of a new kingdom. Also that he would get his share of power, authority and all related things. But Jesus did not do that! Even after conquering death, he did not stay on, in Jerusalem. But he went over to Galilee and asked his disciples to meet him there. And he revealed himself as the Christ, the Messiah who would not be ascending the throne. And he was calling his disciples to follow the way of the cross. And the Risen Master wanted to ensure that Peter loved that particular Master, the Master he proved himself to be.

To be continued

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

The Prophetic Ministry

A. V. Itty

1Kgs.18:22 - 40

"The Lord sent fire down, and it burnt up the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones, scorched the earth and dried up the water in the trench" (v.38).

The prophetic ministry has been given recognition and respect in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament! St. Paul says: "He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers." (Eph. 4:11)

The prophets have been appointed to give God's messages to the people of God, and to point it out, whenever they deviate from the will of God. The Scripture portion we consider refers to the courageous action of Elijah, the powerful prophet in the Old Testament, against Baal worship by the people of Israel.

Elijah could perform wonders by bringing down fire from heaven and thus making people say together that the God of Elijah is the true God. If we try to understand how Elijah became powerful, we would see that he walked with God and that he was courageous enough to proclaim, without fearing any consequences that the God whom he served was the real God. He was also a prayer



warrior. He strictly obeyed God. He obeyed God when he was asked to hide himself on the shore of Cherith and when he was asked, after three years of hiding, to show himself to Ahab, he did so without fearing the consequences. (1 Kgs. 18:1-18).

Today's problem is that we lack people who act with prophetic vision. So wickedness grows up in the Church and in the society. God



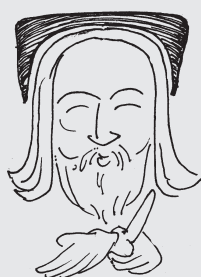
Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha. 94950 17850 (Mob)

has called us for prophetic ministry as well. May we be able to fulfil it.

May God bless.

Food For Thought:

Prophet is the voice of the Heavenly Lord on the Earth!



The
DAWN
has come;
why remain
DRAWN?

Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church Manava Seva Award To The Celebrated Economist Dr. M. A. Oommen



The Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Church Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma presents the Award to Dr. M. A. Oommen. On the Right Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Mar Theethos

The Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church awarded its, this year's, Manava Seva Award (Award for the great service to the humanity) to the great, world renowned economist Dr. M. A. Oommen for his path-breaking, history creating contributions in the area of social sciences and in serving the people, especially, the poor, the deprived and the excluded.

The award was presented to Dr. M. A. Oommen by the Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Church, the Most Rev. Dr. Theodosius Mar Thoma, at Tiruvalla on 1 Sept. 2023. Presenting the Award to Dr. M. A. Oommen, the Metropolitan said "Dr. M. A. Oommen has been doing great, dedicated, prophetic service to the society, especially in the field of economics. In the award document it is mentioned that Dr. Oommen won over one and all, with his very outstanding scholarship, unusually simple and delightful camaraderie, exemplary commitment to the poor, the oppressed and the excluded. His contributions in the field of economics, and in the areas of decentralized governance are historical milestones. All these and his incomparable commitment to the great causes of humanity have inspired the Mar Thoma Syrian Church to present this year's 'Manava Seva Award' (Award for the Service to Humanity) to Dr. M. A. Oommen."

Receiving the Award, Dr. M. A. Oommen said, "The Mar Thoma Church inspired and emboldened me to say to the scholarly world that Development is the ideology of the marginalized and the excluded. The values and the vision I got from the church helped me to cross the 'Red Sea', to draw water from the rocks and to dismantle the 'Jericho walls'. The Church 'lighted to lighten' has a high moral responsibility. And we are called at this time, to lighten the young generation addicted to liquor and drugs. Hopefully the Mar Thoma Church has to be the torch bearers in a society that is rudderless."

World Council of Churches

Care for creation and justice are at the centre of the WCC work on climate change

The Bible teaches the wholeness of creation and calls human beings to take care of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). The God of the Bible is a God of justice who protects, loves and cares for the most vulnerable among his creatures.

The present world development model is threatening the lives and livelihoods of many, especially among the world's poorest people, and destroying biodiversity. The ecumenical vision is to overcome this model based on over-consumption and greed.

Since the 1970s, the WCC has helped develop the concept of sustainable communities. Since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted in 1992, the WCC has been present at all UN climate change conferences.

Over the years, the WCC helped foster a movement for climate justice touching millions of people around the world.

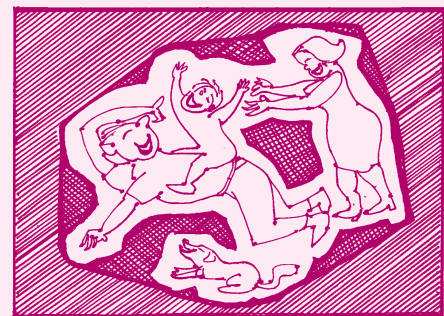
**It's time for climate justice.
When creation is threatened,
churches and Christians are called to speak out
and act as an expression of their commitment
to life, justice and love.**

— WCC News

CHEER CHAT

The best way
to cheer yourself up
is to try to
cheer somebody else up.

— Mark Twain



Climate Change

Poses a growing threat to children's health and well-being

"Besides a radical decrease
in emissions of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere,
there is an urgent need for recognition
that climate destruction is a trigger of violence
against children and against future generations"



Participants in the Fridays for Future march in Glasgow, UK, 5 November 2021, during COP26.
Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

A new study published in the journals "The Lancet" and "Child Abuse and Neglect" co-authored by the World Council of Churches (WCC) highlights the alarming impact of climate change on the health and wellbeing of children.

"This study underscores the urgent need to recognize that inadequate responses to the climate emergency pose a profound ethical concern affecting every aspect of the rights, physical and emotional wellbeing of children," said Frederique Seidel, WCC senior advisor on child rights. "As people of faith, we are called to tackle the root causes of the climate emergency, as an urgent measure for protecting children from the dire consequences of a warming world."

Drawing from various sources, the research describes the impacts of the climate crisis as a form of structural violence against children. It highlights an

urgency to revise definitions, research agendas, policy actions, and legal frameworks to adequately address the physical and psychological consequences of global warming on children.

"The study's message is clear: "Besides a radical decrease in emissions of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, there is an urgent need for recognition that climate destruction is a trigger of violence against children and against future generations," said Seidel.

In the meantime, WCC and partners made available a guide for asset owners, addressing such violence against children by verifying their own banks and pension funds are not accelerating global warming through the financing of fossil fuel expansion. The guide is entitled "Save Children's Lives: Climate-Responsible Banking Survival Guide."

Please see column 1 (Page 8)

People's Reporter

Printed and Published by
Vattukalathil Chacko John
No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial
Estate, Nehru Road,
Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East
Mumbai - 400 055
for and
on behalf of
New Education and Welfare
Service Trust
and
Printed at
Anita Art Printers,
No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial
Estate, Nehru Road,
Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East
Mumbai - 400 055
Ph: 022 - 26652978
and
Published at
No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial
Estate, Nehru Road,
Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East
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